THE
Dan Smoot Report

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DAN SMOOT

THE POVERTY WAR GRAVY TRAIN

Title II of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (poverty war law) created the Community Action programs, which require participation of the "poor" in planning and operating poverty programs. Thus, people who cannot make a living for themselves are presumed qualified to help plan and manage government programs involving millions of tax dollars. In practice, "participation of the poor" often means that groups of people on welfare, organized by Negro militants and other agitators, decide how much more they want from taxpayers, and then demonstrate (by picketing, rioting, or otherwise) until they get it.

While productive citizens work to provide tax money for the poverty warriors and the idle reliefers, the poverty warriors incite the reliefers to hatred of the "white power structure" for not providing enough free and easy living.

There are more than 1000 local community action agencies operating on poverty war funds. About 80% are private organizations, public officials having no hand in their operation. Under this system, the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington has been bypassing city and state governments, giving money to groups controlled by subversives, Negro militants, monopolistic unions, the National Council of Churches.

One example: in June, 1967, the OEO gave $972 thousand to a private Negro group in Chicago, known as the Woodlawn Organization. Woodlawn Organization hires high school dropouts (at annual salaries ranging up to $6500) to supervise and teach other dropouts who get $45 a week (plus an allowance for dependents) for attending classes. At peak enrollment in 1967, there were about 200 students (age 16 to 24).[1] The number of teachers and other faculty members has not been disclosed.

In December, 1967, Chicago police learned that several of Woodlawn Organization's teachers and administrators were in serious trouble with the law, charged with such crimes as rape, murder, aggravated battery.[1]

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Eugene Hairston, age 20, a $6500-a-year assistant director of the Woodlawn Organization project, resigned a few days before being arrested and jailed without bond on a charge of conspiracy to commit murder. Jeffrey Fort, age 20, was suspended from a $6000-a-year OEO-financed job after being arrested and held without bond on charges of murdering a 13-year-old. But three other officials in the Woodlawn Organization's OEO project were still on the job and drawing salaries, after they had been arrested and charged with rape, and released on bail.[1]

Commenting on these disclosures, the Reverend Arthur M. Brazier (president of Woodlawn Organization) said:

"The program is working out as well as can be expected. . . .

"Most of these youth [the 200 being paid $45 a week plus allowances to attend class, and the undisclosed number of teachers and officials] have police records. . . .

"This is not a Boy Scout program."[1]

On January 9, 1968, in one of Woodlawn Organization's classroom buildings, Joseph Evans (17-year-old school dropout, who was drawing $45 a week of taxpayers' money to attend the school) was felled and seriously wounded by a shotgun blast fired by another teenager. The Reverend Brazier said he believed the shooting of Evans was accidental. He did not try to explain why the other teenager brought a loaded shotgun to class.[2]

In 1967, when passing a bill to extend the Office of Economic Opportunity another 2 years, Congress (in response to public pressure) included a requirement that a community action agency be a local or state government agency, or a non-profit group designated by a state or local government.

This was intended to give responsible local officials some control over the rampaging community action agencies. Congress vitiated its own intent, however, with a provision which permits the OEO director to continue financing uncontrolled private groups — if the director does not like the way local and state officials run community action agencies.

The Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities has exposed a typical poverty war operation in a six-county area of southern Louisiana, where Acadiana Neuf, the poverty war agency, has been receiving about $2.6 million annually from OEO. Acadiana Neuf administers some of the poverty operations for which it dispenses tax money; but it passes most of its OEO funds on to other groups (called "delegate agencies") which spend the money as they please, with no supervision by Acadiana Neuf, no audit from Washington.[3]

In control of these "delegate agencies" are such people as John Zippert, a white race-agitator and communist-fronter from New York, who infiltrated the Louisiana poverty program for the ostensible purpose of teaching Louisiana farmers how to grow sweet potatoes! Millions of tax dollars have been funneled through Acadiana Neuf into SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), and into the hands of such people as John Zippert and Arthur Herbert Emery, Jr. (a convicted draft dodger). The poverty warriors teach Louisiana Negroes how to make war on the "white power structure."[3]

In the records of these "delegate agencies" of the poverty war in south Louisiana, there are discrepancies (and sworn lies) involving hundreds of thousands of tax dollars; but no audit has been made by OEO. The subversives and agitators have not been required to account for the money. Officials of Acadiana Neuf have protested, but to no avail. The characters in the "delegate agencies" deal directly with OEO in Washington, or with the OEO regional office in Austin, Texas; and Acadiana Neuf is reduced to the role of dispensing tax money without knowing what is done with it.[3]

Elsewhere, poverty war operations are about the same.

Career Orientation Preparation for Employment is a Newark, New Jersey, antipoverty employment project for young people from low-income families. It has received more than $1 million from the

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OEO in Washington. In November, 1967, an audit revealed evidence of kickbacks and payroll padding. Findings of the audit were given to the Essex County prosecutor's office; but neither that office nor any other official agency would say how much money and how many people were involved in the illegal practices.[4]

In May, 1967, Rentar Trucking, Inc., in New York City, was given a $570 thousand contract to run a city antipoverty program, training young men as truck drivers. In January, 1968, the Brooklyn district attorney said he had enough information to justify a grand jury inquiry into reports that the trucking firm had billed the city for the use of trucks never used in the training program; that it had spent $100 thousand of the contract money to repair a building to be used in the training program for only 4 months.[5] The president of the trucking firm refused to testify before the grand jury.[6]

VISTA (Volunteers in Service To America) is a federally-financed organization of volunteers (mostly middle-class college students) who live in the slums and mingle with the poor, as part of the antipoverty program. There are about 3700 VISTA workers altogether. Their salaries are paid by OEO.[7]

On February 14, 1968, 4 VISTA workers called a press conference in New York City to announce that they and 172 other VISTA personnel had written President Johnson a letter urging him to pull out of Vietnam and divert war spending to "poverty and racism" in the United States.[7]

T. F. X. Higgins, a VISTA official, said:

"As individuals, they have a right to express an opinion. They do not have a right to speak for VISTA. When they speak publicly as a group, there is a certain ambiguity. If we find they spoke for VISTA, we will take appropriate measures."[7]

The incidents herein related—some petty, some sinister—are samplings of what is happening in the poverty war throughout the United States. Congress knew about this situation before extending the Office of Economic Opportunity Act in 1967. The people knew too, and put pressure on Congress to do something.

There was not enough statesmanship in Congress even to consider what should have been done —namely, repeal of the Economic Opportunity Act, because it is unconstitutional. But the House, as if to ease its own conscience and allay public indignation, did make several changes in the law to render it less harmful and offensive to the country. Then, the House accepted a Senate-House conference bill which eliminated the reforms and restored the antipoverty program to what it was before—indeed, even making it worse by extending the OEO act 2 years instead of the customary 1 year, thus avoiding the embarrassment of debating new authorizations under the ill-conceived legislation again in the 1968 election year.

The House had included a provision denying poverty funds to any person convicted of inciting a riot. The Senate-House conference eliminated this provision.[8]

The House had included a provision prohibiting present or past members of the Communist Party from administering work-training programs in the poverty war. The Senate-House conference changed this to bar only *present* Communist Party members.[8] This is the same as inviting communists into the poverty programs. A communist need only deny that he is, at the moment questioned, an official member of the party. He is then protected by law from being fired.

The House had included a provision prohibiting antipoverty workers from engaging in picketing, protests, demonstrations, riots, or any similar group activities. The Senate-House conference cleverly emasculated this provision by inserting the word "unlawful." Poverty warriors can continue to engage in disruptive violence that is not formally designated "unlawful."[9]

At Washington OEO headquarters, there are 49 poverty-war officials in "supergrade" pay status, which means they draw salaries ranging from $19,000 to $30,000. The OEO director also hires "experts" and "consultants" whose pay ranges

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from $50 to $100 a day. The House adopted provisions limiting the number of "supergrade" poverty-war officials, abolishing the OEO director's power to hire "experts" and "consultants." The Senate-House conference eliminated these provisions.[8]

Congressmen who had boasted about voting to "reform" the OEO, quietly voted for the final bill minus the reforms.

As finally passed by Senate and House (December 8 and 11), the 1967 bill, which extended the Office of Economic Opportunity Act another 2 years, *authorized* $1.98 billion for fiscal year 1968, $2.18 billion for fiscal 1969.

Congress *appropriated* $1.773 billion for fiscal year 1968. In his 1968 State of the Union message, the President said he wants Congress to appropriate for fiscal 1969 the full amount authorized last year ($2.18 billion).

Because Congress has relieved itself of the necessity of passing another OEO authorization bill in 1968, the question of appropriating the money already authorized may be brought up quietly and pushed through without public notice.

ACTION: Distribute copies of this *Report*: write letters to newspapers; get others informed and aroused—so that Congress will know the people want no more of their money appropriated under the Economic Opportunity Act, but want the law repealed.

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FOOTNOTES

(1) UPI dispatch from Chicago, Dec. 22, 1967

(2) UPI dispatch from Chicago, Jan. 10, 1968

(3) *Aspects Of The Poverty Program In South Louisiana*, The Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities, State of Louisiana, Report No. 8, April 14, 1967, 186 pp.

(4) AP dispatch from Newark, Nov. 11, 1967

(5) Article by John Sibley, *The New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1968, pp. 1, 22

(6) Article by John Sibley, *The New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1968, p. 55

(7) Article by Edith Evans Asbury, *The New York Times*, Feb. 15, 1968, p. 26

(8) "Congress Clears Two-Year Antipoverty Program," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, Dec. 15, 1967, pp. 2546-51

(9) "Still A Loose Leash On Poverty Warriors," by Paul S. Allen, *The Hayward* (Calif.) *Review*, Dec. 24, 1967

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